



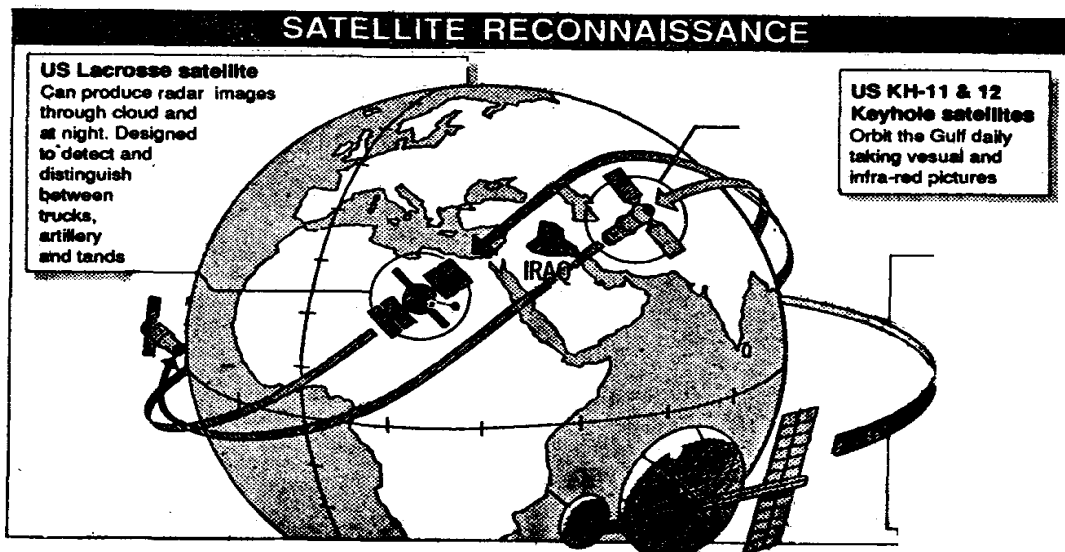
# Al-Risala 1991

September

## Satellite Reconnaissance

In the early stages of civilization, man depended on his own two eyes to see. Then came the telescope, which dramatically extended his vision. Now with recent advances in technology, it is possible to observe the enemy through space satellites and to score direct hits on targets. This was demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of military experts in the recent Gulf war. Such high technology never having been used before, there are many lessons to be learned from these events.

According to a war report, 'Eyes of the Allies in the Sky,' published by *The Times of India*, on January 31, 1991, Iraq launched several dozen scud missiles over Israel and Saudi Arabia only to have a large number of them destroyed in mid-air before they could reach their targets. Wars fought prior to this had witnessed the effective use of long-range guns and bombs, etc. The concept of their interception did not at that time exist. Now, how did the Americans manage to intercept within the realms of possibility by two satellites orbiting in space and controlled from a ground station located in central Australia.



As part of the entire system, called the Defence Support Programme, American Satellites, orbiting at an altitude of 150 miles, continuously transmitted military information about the Iraqis, irrespective of weather conditions, and without their having to fly directly over Iraq to obtain pictures, this being possible from other positions. These satellites are fitted with 3 metre long infrared telescopes, which sense the heat generated by the firing of a Scud missile. This information is immediately transmitted to the patriot missile system, which makes an instant computer calculation of the scud's anticipated position before launching its own missile. The whole operation takes just one minute. The spy satellite is usually beyond enemy reach, and, according to the report in this instance provided round-the-clock coverage of Iraq in all weather conditions.

These events serve to remind us that there is a supreme power watching over the entire universe. He watches not just one country but the whole, and that, too, at every moment of our lives. He sees things from all sides.

This takes place according to the Divine Scheme. It is done in order to negate oppression and to thwart and destroy the nefarious plans of the world's tyrants; to aid the righteous and to bring them to victory.

Wrongdoers must have it brought home to them that their evil designs will never succeed. Any activity of a nature harmful to mankind will be intervened in and brought to ruin by the Divine Power before it can cause widespread destruction.

This world is a place of trial. And because of this, man has been given freedom of action. A man's actions, therefore, are governed by his own will. For this reason, it is frequently possible for him to succeed in harming other human beings.

But his freedom is not unlimited. He lives under the surveillance of the Almighty, who does not allow him to use his freedom in just any manner he wishes. Beyond a certain point, he is reined in by God: God has promised to help His servants in time of need. Sometimes His help comes immediately. Sometimes it comes after a certain lapse of time. Whether it is instant or delayed, it does arrive in some manner of our Creator's choosing. Its form is not always predictable.

## The Helplessness of Man

On 12 August 1985, a Boeing 747 aeroplane carrying passengers from Tokyo to Osaka crashed into the mountains, killing 519 people. There were few survivors.

According to the newspaper reports, among those killed was 26 year-old Mrs. Mariko Shirai. Among the various things salvaged from the wreckage of the aircraft were a few pages of a time planner belonging to Mrs. Shirai. The following words were found scribbled on the time planner:

Help me, horror, horror, horror.

The Quran tells us that man has been created weak and infirm (4 : 28). But, under normal, favourable circumstances, man forgets that he had been so created, and even goes so far as to commit and perpetuate oppression. It is only when he finds himself in critical situations that the truth dawns on him and he realizes just how helpless he is. He then has the same sense of helplessness which was evident in the scribbling of the Japanese woman.

Such critical moments are created for man with the specific intention of making him aware of his limitations so that he gives.

Such critical moments are created for man with the specific intention of making him aware of his limitations so that he gives up being arrogant and develops a more amenable disposition. Human nature being as it is, he will become humble only so long as he is faced with adversity. The moment he surmounts his difficulties, he will resume his tyrannical ways.

Only those who can learn a lesson even from the most trivial of incidents, from day-to-day happenings, will be able to reform themselves and make of this experience a life-long affair.

6 September 1991

### Being punctilious in paying people their dues

Abdullah ibn Umar records the Prophet as saying: "Pay a labourer his wages before his sweat has dried."

(Ibn Majah)

## Vital preparation

The film on Gandhiji made by Richard Attenborough became extremely popular, principally because British actor, Ben Kingsley, who played the title role, took such pains to look and act exactly like the Mahatma. In order to get the part just right, Kingsley underwent extraordinary hardships. Accustomed off-screen to a royal life-style, and keeping a table which boasts more varieties of food than our nawabs and rajas ever had, Kingsley now embarked on a life of semi starvation, and that, too, over quite a long period of time.

It was no mean feat to present the image of the thin, lean ascetic, striding along, staff in hand. Only by almost starving did Kingsley manage to shed the necessary seven kilograms of body weight before appearing on the screen. This same tough course was adopted by the Maharashtrian actress who played the part of Kasturba Gandhiji's wife.

Although playing a part in a film or a stage production is an arduous experience, it is a much harder struggle to play the real-life role of a leader of the people. Yet we repeatedly find the strange phenomenon of a 'leader' entering the field of leadership without any special preparation whatsoever.

For his role in the film, Kingsley almost had to kill himself physically in order to give of his best; in that hardest of all tasks, the guidance of a nation, a true leader has to kill the self, the ego. Where Kingsley had to shed body weight, the leader has to shed the dead weight of his own egoism.

Those who enter the field of national leadership without due preparation should be regarded not as leaders, but as posturers and deceivers.

7 September 1991

### One who lives receives

“Every day, two angels visit the servants of God on earth. One of them prays: “Lord, reward those who spend,” while the other prays, “Lord, destroy the wealth of those who withhold.”

(Al-Bukhari Muslim)

## Choosing the Best Method

Five billion dollars are spent annually on drinks by The Australians. So writes the Australian journalist, Mervyn Hardinge, quoting from a statement made on the subject by the Australian Minister for Health Services. (Reproduced in *The Statesman*, August 6, 1990, P.6)

It seems that this massive consumption of alcohol has resulted in a serious increase in road accidents and that ailments which are known to result from heavy drinking have become prevalent. One out of ten Australians suffer from alcohol-related brain damage. Attempts to check or reduce drinking through anti-liquor campaigns and increased taxes on drinks have been a dismal failure.

Certain Australian intellectuals have made a proposal to solve the problem through education. But Mr. Hardinge is sceptical. He says, "Any anti-liquor education programme must inevitably fail, for the simple reason that most of the prospective converts would be too fuddled to attend class."

The view expressed here about anti-liquor education holds true for other efforts of this kind. For instance, the many programmes shown on television in Pakistan under the scheme of Islamization were watched only by those who had no need of them, for the people at whom these programmes were actually targeted switched off their TV sets as soon as they were announced.

The truth is that any such reformation in thinking can be carried out more effectively through consistent missionary campaigns than through formal school education or T V programmes.



8 September 1991

**Building more for the hereafter than for this world.**

A Muslim of Medina had just built himself a house, and was spreading mud on the roof when the Prophet passed by. "What are you doing?" the Prophet asked him. "Applying some mud," came the reply, to which the Prophet said: "The Hour is nigh; closer than that which you apply."

## The Power of Forgiveness

Once, during the early days of Islam, in the month of Jumadi I (4AH) when the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, was leading a military expedition to Zat al Riqa he halted to take rest in a desolate place. Before laying down, he hung his sword on the branch of a tree.

A polytheist by the name of Ghoras ibn al Harith noticed Muhammad, may peace be upon him, lay resting, removed the sword from the tree, then, brandishing it over him, he said "O Muhammad, who can save you from me?" the Prophet's immediate response was 'Allah!' The confidence with which the Prophet uttered the name of Allah struck terror into the heart of his opponent, and he dropped the sword. Picking it up, Muhammad, may peace be upon him, asked him, "Now who will save you from me?" The man replied<sup>1</sup>, "May you be the better wielder of the sword." The Prophet forgave him and let him go unharmed.

1. That is, it would be improper to revenge yourself on a helpless opponent.

The man returned to his clan only to declare that he had come from the man who was best of all. This was the sentiment expressed by a man who, only a short time before, had declared himself fully prepared to kill Muhammad, may peace be upon him.<sup>2</sup>

2. Seerah ibn Kathir, vol3, p. 164

If Muhammad, may peace be upon him, had killed this man who threatened to take his life, the news of his revenge would have incited the man's clan to retaliate. But since he had not reacted in a revengeful way, this incident left them deeply impressed. Even after gaining the upperhand, Muhammad had allowed his adversary to go unscathed. This in itself established that Muhammad, may peace be upon him, was a man of character. Shortly thereafter, Ghoras ibn Haris entered the fold of Islam, followed by his whole clan. An incident which could have sparked off a clan' war had thus been deftly turned to advantage. In this way, the influence of Islam went on increasing.

## Freedom of Enquiry

In his well-known book, *The Legacy of Islam* (1931), Baron Carra de Vaux acknowledges the achievements of the Arabs, but nevertheless relegates them to the status of pupils of the Greeks. Bertrand Russell, too, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, sees the Arabs only as transmitters of Greek thought, i.e. that they brought Greek knowledge to Europe through their translations.

But this does not do justice to the academic attainments of the Arabs. It is true that the Arabs studied Greek literature and profited thereby. But what they 'transmitted' to Europe was much more than they themselves had received from Greece. The truth is that the ideas which sparked off the Renaissance, in Europe had not formed part of Greek thought. Had that been so Europe would not have had to wait a thousand years for its Renaissance.

It is well known that the progress made by the Greeks was mostly in the fields of art and philosophy. Their contribution to the field of science was actually quite negligible. The only exception is that of Archimedes, who was struck down by a Roman soldier in 212 BC while pondering over geometrical problems in the sand.

(J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*, p. 238)

It is an indisputable fact that for scientific enquiry and scientific progress, an atmosphere of intellectual freedom is absolutely essential. But if such an atmosphere did not exist in any of the countries of ancient times, neither did it exist in Greece. Socrates, for example, was forced to commit suicide by drinking hemlock as a punishment for his encouraging free enquiry among the youths of Athens. According to Plutarch, in *The Ancient Customs of the Spartans*, the Spartans learned to read and write for purely practical reasons, and all other educational influences—books and treatises, as well as the discourses of learned men were banned. The arts and philosophy flourished in democratic Athens, yet many artists and philosophers, among them Aeschylus, Euripides, Phidias, Socrates, and Aristotle were either exiled, imprisoned or executed or they took flight.

Aeschylus was accused of violating the secrecy of the Eleusinian mysteries. (Fictions which had become part and parcel of Greek thought) His being put to death on the basis of this accusation is further proof of the fact that the atmosphere for scientific progress did not exist in ancient Greece.

The state of science prior to the modern, scientific age is well illustrated by the fate of Pope Sylvester II (Gerbert), who was renowned for his erudition. He was born in 945 in France and died in 1003. He was well versed in Greek and Latin and was famous for his scholarly achievements in various fields.

Gerbert was taken to Spain in 967 by Count Borrell of Barcelona and remained there for three years. There he studied the sciences of the Arabs and was greatly impressed by them. When he came back

from Spain he brought with him several translations of these books and an astrolabe. When he began teaching Arab Science, logic, mathematics, astronomy, etc, he faced stiff opposition. The Christians attributed his learning to magical arts learned in Spain, some to the devil's coaching. In such unfavourable circumstance, he finally died on May 12, 1003, in Rome, (EB-17/ 899).

From the beginning of recorded history right up to the time of Islam there had been no such concept as intellectual freedom. That is why we hear of only isolated instances of individuals who in ancient times, 'Nere given to scientific thinking. And scientific thinking could not go beyond those individuals. For want of intellectual freedom, such thinking was nipped in the bud.

Islam, for the first time in history, separated religious knowledge from physical knowledge. The source of religious knowledge which came into general acceptance was divine revelation (the authentic version of which is preserved in the form of the Qur'an) While full freedom was given to enquiry into physical phenomena so that individuals could arrive at their own conclusions independently.

*The Sahih Muslim* (vol. 4), the second most authentic book on Hadith, dating from the second century Hijrah, contains a chapter headed as follows: "Whatever the Prophet has said in matters of shariah (religion) must be followed, but this does not apply to worldly affairs:"

In this chapter, Imam Muslim has recorded a tradition narrated by Moosa ibn Talha on the authority of his father who said, "I was with the Prophet when he passed by some people who had climbed up to the top of some date palms. The Prophet enquired as to what they were doing. He was told that they were pollinating the trees in order to fertilize them by touching the male to the female. The Prophet said, "I don't think this will benefit them." When people learned of the Prophet's comment, they stopped the practice of pollination. The yield, however, was very low that year. When the Prophet came to know of this, he said, "If they benefit from pollination, they should continue with this practice. I had only made a guess. It was an opinion. There is no need to follow my opinion in such matters. If, on the other hand, I say anything about God, it must be adhered to, because I never say anything untrue when I am speaking of God.

The same story is told by Aisha, the Prophet's wife, and by Thabit and Anas, who were lifelong companions of the Prophet. At the end the Prophet told the date growers to stick to their own methods, because "you know your world better."

According to this Hadith, Islam separates religious matters from scientific research. In religious affairs, there has to be strict adherence to divine guidance. But in scientific research, the work must proceed according to human experience. This indeed marks the advent of the greatest revolution in the history of science.

It is true that in ancient times, there were certain individuals in different countries whose personal achievements in the field of science were considerable. However, due to lack of co-operation and other adverse circumstances, their findings did not gain currency either at home or abroad.

Moseleban, a French historian, writes in his book, *The Arab Civilization*, that in ancient times many nations became sufficiently powerful to dominate others, Persia, Greece and Rome ruling over eastern countries at different times. They were not, however, able to exert their cultural influence on these countries to any appreciable extent. Neither could their religion be spread 'throughout these nations, nor could their language, or their sciences, or their industries take root and flourish. Not only did Egypt hold to its own religion during the days of Roman rule, but the conquerors themselves adopted the religion and the architecture of the conquered. The buildings constructed in those periods were patterned on the architecture developed by the Pharaohs.

However, the goal that the Greeks, Persians and Romans were unable to achieve in Egypt was attained by the Arabs in a very short time and without resorting to the use of force. This was in spite of the obvious difficulties for Egypt in adopting the way of life of an alien nation and of adopting a new religion and a new language within the space of just one century when it meant abandoning an ancient culture which dated back seven thousand years. The same influence was exerted by Arabs on African countries and on Syria and Iran. Islam spread rapidly among these peoples. Even in those countries where the Arabs never ruled, where they came only as merchants, Islam spread with great rapidity, China being one of the notable examples.

No similar instance is found in world history of such an influence being exerted by the conqueror on the conquered. Even those countries who merely had temporary contacts with the Arabs came to adopt their culture. More surprisingly, communities like the Turks and the Mughals, who conquered Muslims, not only accepted their religion and culture but also became their staunchest supporters. Even till today, when the spirit of the Arab civilization is in decline right from the Atlantic Ocean to the Sindh River, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the deserts of Africa, one religion and one language are still in vogue – the religion and the language of the Prophet (*The Arab Civilization*.)

Moseleban states, moreover, that the Arab influence was as visible in western countries as it was in the East. From the Arabs, the West acquired a culture while, in the East, the Arab influence affected every thing from religion and languages to the arts, crafts and sciences. In the West, religion, crafts and industries were not greatly affected. There was more influence on the arts and sciences.

Through the Arabs, monotheism, and a civilization born under its influence, spread everywhere. Its impact was felt in major parts of the inhabited world of the time. Thus an atmosphere and an environment were produced in which scientific research, leading to the conquest of nature's phenomena, could be freely and independently undertaken.

## The Lesson of the Owl

Generally, those who are influenced by superstition consider the sight of an owl to be a bad omen, for the owl is traditionally a portent of doom and destruction. But the truth is that the owl, just like everything else in this world, has its uses. In spite of its bad associations, it is a help to the farmer, for it preys on insects and small birds and animals which are harmful to the crops. Whether standing in the fields or stored away in granaries. The creatures on which it preys are mostly rodents, such as rats and mice, but it also kills lizards, grasshoppers and other large insects, beetles, small birds, bats, frogs, and snakes, etc. It thus prevents precious foodstuffs from being eaten away. There is a certain irony in the fact that this feared creature, the owl, kills things which are harmful to man, whereas man himself slaughters innocent, harmless creatures solely in order to celebrate his own supremacy.

There are over 130 species of owls which vary greatly in size, from the tiny elf owl, which is the same size as a pygmy, to the great eagle owl, which is nearly as large as the golden eagle. Some of the hawk owls have rather long, strong tails which enable them to turn sharply while flying in order to catch small birds in flight. But most owls have rather short wings and tail. This, however, is no disadvantage, for it is offset by their amazing capability for night hunting – silent flight. Although most owls have feathered feet, their claws are very sharp and they use all four of them as effective, killing weapons.

With one or two exceptions, owls are either still hunters or low-level gliders hunting in open country. As is well known, owls have remarkably good eyesight at night. But they have an even more remarkable aid for nocturnal hunting; three dimensional hearing. Owls possess facial discs shaped to trap sounds, and symmetrical ears which are located in different positions on each side of the head.

Even when hunting on a dark, moonless night, most owls are able to locate and strike their prey by sound alone.

The owls, therefore, generally locate their prey by the senses of sight and, above all, hearing, and taking full advantage of the darkness fall on the victim. Their completely noiseless flight gives them the advantage also of being able to take the unsuspecting animal, by surprise, (*Hindustan Times*, September 9, 1989)

Everyone of God's creations has a role to play in this world. There is nothing which does not have a function. Even a creature like the owl has, as we have seen, its useful aspects. Now if a man leads the kind of life which is of no benefit to others, or he simply ceases to be of assistance to others, he becomes a harmful instead of a useful factor in society. In the eyes of God, he is worse than the owl. Such a man is of no use either to humanity or to God.

15 September 1991

### **Muslims should be dearer to each other than money.**

Abdullah ibn Umar is reported to have said: "There was a time when not one of us would have set his dirhams and dinars above his Muslim brothers. Now, a time has come when we put our dirhams and dinars first and our Muslim brothers second."

(Al- Tabarani)

### Spending for the cause of Islam in times of distress

When Abu Bakr first became a Muslim, he possessed forty thousand dirhams, all of which wealth he devoted to the cause of Islam. At that time Islam was going through a difficult period. For this reason the Prophet said: "No one's wealth has benefitted me so much as Abu Bakr's." (As related by Hesham ibn Urwah who heard this from his father.)



15 September 1991

### **Thrift, even in the midst of plenty.**

The Prophet once passed by Saad while the latter was pouring water over himself from a large vessel to perform his ablution, "What is this extravagance, O Saad?" said the Prophet. "Prophet of God, said Saad, "Can there be extravagance even in one's ablutions?" "Yes indeed, replied the Prophet, "even if you are standing on the banks of a river,"

(Ahmad)

## Why did I Embrace Islam

By Al-Haaj Lord Headley al-Farooq (U.K.)

It is possible some of my friends may imagine that I have been influenced by Muhammadans; but this is not the case, for my present convictions are solely the outcome of many years of thought. My actual conversations with educated Muslims on the subject of religion only commenced a few weeks ago, and need I say that I am overjoyed to find that all my theories and conclusions are entirely in accord with Islam.

Conversions according to the Qur'an should come out of free choice and spontaneous judgement, and never be attained by means of compulsion. I have known very many instances of zealous protestants who have thought it their duty to visit Roman Catholic homes in order to make 'converts' of the inmates. I am sorry to think that Christian missionaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren, though I am at a loss to conceive, why should they try to convert those who are already better Christians than they are themselves? I say 'better Christians' advisedly, because charity, tolerance and broad mindedness in the Muslim faith come nearer to what Christ himself taught than do the somewhat narrow tenet of the various Christian churches .

.... As I have often said before, Islam and Christianity, as taught by Christ himself, are sister religions, only held apart by dogmas and technicalities which might very well be dispensed with.

In the present day men are prone to become atheists when asked to subscribe to dogmatic and intolerant beliefs, and there is doubtless a craving for a religion appealing to the sentiments of men. Whoever heard of a Muslim turning atheist? There may have been some cases, but I very much doubt it.

There are thousands of men-and women, too, I believe who are at heart Muslims, but convention, fear of adverse comments, and desire to avoid any worry or change, conspire to keep them from openly admitting the fact. I have taken the step, though I am quite aware that many friends, and relatives now look upon me as a lost soul and past praying for. And yet I am just the same in my beliefs as I was twenty years ago; it is the outspoken utterance which has lost me their good opinion.

Having briefly given some of the reasons for adopting the teachings of Islam, and having explained that I consider myself by that very act of a far better Christian than I was before, I can only hope that others will follow the example – which I honestly believe is a good one – which will bring happiness to anyone looking upon the step as one in advance rather than one any way hostile to true Christianity.

(Courtesy: *Yaqeen International. Karachi*)

## An Invocation

Amr ibn Bahr ibn Mahboob Al Kanami (163-225 AH), better known as Al Jahiz, lived in Basra and was renowned as a leading light in the world of literature, so fond was he of reading that when he died after a stroke, he was found with a book<sup>1</sup> lying on his chest. In it he had written the following invocation.

(1) *Al-Bayan wa at Tabiyin*

'O Allah, we seek your protection from the mischief of utterance as we seek your protection from the mischief of deeds. We seek your protection against undertaking any task which we cannot competently perform. Likewise, we seek your protection against taking pride in a job well done. And we seek your protection from being found wanting in the art of language and the ability to given expression to our thoughts.'

This world is a place of trial, as is evident from all aspects of life. A God-fearing man must, therefore, seek the protection and help of the Almighty in all that he ventures upon. Trial in this world is not about what one has gained or lost, but what one's reactions have been under different sets of circumstances. A man has to be as prudent in his utterances as he is in his deeds; his moral balance should be undisturbed by either failure or success. When he rises to a position of power, he should in all humility remain as devoted to God as he was when he was weak and helpless.

What is on trial in this world is both success and failure, action and inaction.

## Character: The Basis of Success

A customer comes into a shop and it turns out that he wants to buy goods worth Rs. 50,000. Inadvertently, he speaks abrasively in the course of bargaining. The shopkeeper becomes enraged and replies in an equally offensive tone. The customer takes himself off in high dudgeon and buys his goods from another shop.

Any true businessman would curse himself for having lost such a good customer. He would reflect upon his actions as not having been justified. He should have shown more patience and just ignored the harshness of the customer's tone. He should have continued to be polite to him. Had he done so, the man would surely have purchased things from his shop. For lack of courtesy, he had lost a customer.

Now if the shopkeeper was not of the right temperament, he would deny his own responsibility and put the entire blame on the customer. He would say, for example, that the man was not really interested in buying: "He only wanted to browbeat me. Why should I have let him do that? Am I his slave? What do I care for such customers? People like him can come and go. I am not bothered." And so on.

The act of *dawah* has been compared in the Qur'an (Al Saf, 10) with trading. Of course, there is a difference between a trader and a dayee – that of their objectives. While the trader aims at worldly gain, the dayee works for the Hereafter. But to be successful, both the trader and the dayee must be of a temperament which displays self-restraint, courtesy and the 'willingness to be forgiving. Without these essential qualities neither the trader nor the dayee can succeed. A trader who has no understanding of such obligations towards his clients will never be able to win them over. Similarly, the dayee who cannot just overlook the misdemeanors of his hearers in order to interact with them pleasantly, will never induce them to pay heed to his message.

## Gulf Diary

### 2

23 January, 1991

The most important news today is that Iraq has set hundreds of Kuwait's oil wells on fire. The leaping flames and rising black smoke have filled the sky. The headlines of the *Hindustan Times* (23 Jan. 91) proclaim: Kuwait Oil Wells Blown Up. This may well mean that Mr. Saddam Hussain is not sure of keeping Kuwait under his control, and has, therefore, decided to destroy the oil wells. When he leaves Kuwait, he would like to see everything destroyed. He has already dumped approximately 350 million gallons of oil into the sea.

Recently Mr. Saddam Hussain had the national flag inscribed with 'Allah-o-Akbar'. He would like to call the present war a holy war (*jihad*). This propaganda seems to have impressed the majority of the Muslims spread across the world, for they have started believing that it is indeed a war between Islam and the infidels. But people who burn nature's gift to humanity can hardly be said to be champions of the Islamic cause. Just consider that when the first caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr, sent out an expeditionary force to Syria under the leadership of Usamah he directed him not to fell any trees.

It is forbidden to cut even a single tree in war. The burning of so many oil wells is, therefore, a crime of far greater magnitude. It is a thousand times worse. It is not only that huge oil deposits are destroyed, but the atmosphere becomes dangerously polluted with smoke and poisonous gases. We should never forget that the oil deposit is not someone's private property; it is a precious gift from God to the whole of humanity and, as such, must be held in trust by it. Man may use it, but he has no right to destroy it. Any deliberate destruction of oil fields is an act of unpardonable criminality. (*Science Reporter*, March, 1991, New Delhi)

But Mr. Saddam Hussain has done just that. He has burnt the oil wells. And not only that, but he has dumped oil into the sea, thus endangering the lives not only of human beings but also of birds and fish. All this notwithstanding Muslims have given Mr. Saddam Hussain the title of Mujahid-e-Islam – one who fights for the cause of Islam. Those who raise the banner of Jihad, but fail to follow the tenets of Islam, are not on firm ground. Their case is not one of jihad but of adding insult to injury Truly, they deserve to be punished rather than rewarded.

## 24 January, 1991

The devastating Gulf war continues with both sides suffering heavy losses, people are being killed. Cities are being destroyed. Birds and fish are dying miserable deaths due to environmental pollution. And the Allied Forces are spending about one billion dollars every day in order to wage this war.

War-mongers have always taken the stand that their fight is in the interests of humanity. The group of 28 countries fighting under the American command say that they are fighting for a weak country against a powerful and tyrannical regime. Mr. Saddam Hussain for his part, would have us believe that he is fighting to correct past mistakes, implying that Kuwait which, by his lights, was formerly a part of Iraq, should once again be merged with Iraq.

Shortly before the American Spanish war broke out in 1898, the British ambassador and six other ambassadors from Europe assembled in Washington to persuade the American President not to go to war. The diplomatic exchanges with the US President in Washington were summarised by the New York World of April 8, 1898.

Said the six ambassadors: We hope for humanity's sake you will not go to war."

Said Mr. Mc Kinley in reply: "We hope if we do go to war, you will understand that it is for humanity's sake."

In the last fifty years, there have been 300 wars of differing magnitudes in the Third World alone. Each warring side has sound justification for its stand. This is a state of affairs which proves the Hereafter to be a moral necessity. The truth is that it is only in the world of the Hereafter that it can be decide a ultimately who is right and who is not.

At the outset, a war may be within the control of the country or .group which started it. But once it is under way, the havoc that it creates is beyond human control. Wisdom dictates that we should permanently distance ourselves from war and all that spells war.

## 25 January, 1991

A *Times of India* report (January 25, 1991) on the Urdu Press states that a violent Muslim mob attacked the office of an Urdu daily, *The Urdu Times* and pelted it with stones. Copies of its newspaper were burnt and the employees of the newspaper were threatened. The reason for this ugly episode was that *The Urdu Times* was the only Urdu paper which had denounced Mr. Saddam Hussain while agreeing with the policies of Saudi Arabia. No true journalism can flourish when faced with this mentality of intolerance.

All other Urdu papers are whole-heartedly supporting Mr. Saddam Hussain. He is being called 'Salahuddin Ayyubi' and 'Saddam' the Mujahid-e-Islam' and his portraits are selling like hot cakes in Muslim localities. The Urdu newspapers which were selling poorly have boosted up their sales

astronomically by publishing emotional articles in support of Mr. Saddam Hussain. Any newspaper carrying headlines like: 'Iraqi scuds deprive the Israelis of their sleep,' or 'Bush bows down to Saddam Hussain', are most popular among the Muslims.

The stance adopted by present-day Muslim journalists and the general attitude of the Muslims remind me of their behaviour during the second world war, at which time India was ruled by Great Britain and the Muslims were at loggerheads with the British. When the Germans bombed Britain, the Muslims were very happy. Their sentiments were aptly expressed in an immensely popular poem which was published in a newspaper. Its title was 'Hitler, the Great!' One of its couplets went like this:

When you go to visit Buckingham Palace this time. Drop a bomb over it in our name.

A similar emotionalism is surging through the Muslims of today, many of whom direct their hatred towards Jews and Christians. When Mr. Saddam Hussain warned the Christians (meaning the Americans and their allies) that they would be drowned in the Gulf, and followed this up with a scud attack over Israel, he set off a 'new wave of popularity for himself among the Muslims. But this reaction hardly goes below the surface. It has nothing to do with Islam or with common sense.

The Muslim press lacks depth. It would not be wrong to say that people who are regular readers of Urdu newspapers are as unenlightened about world affairs as a reader of Ghalib or Zauq would be about modern science

## 26 January, 1991

On January 26, 1991 the *Hindustan Times* published a detailed description of Mr. Saddam Hussain's 'palace' in Baghdad under the headline: "Saddam Can Live One Year in Bunker." This presidential 'palace', according to the report, is a concrete construction situated at a depth of 120 feet, is fully air-conditioned and fitted with lifts. President Saddam Hussain could live there for up to one year and be safe from nuclear attack.

According to Mr. Leberre, a French engineer who helped to build the palace and the bunker, "you go down in the lift after passing through a very thick door concealed behind the panelling in the President's office. You then have to pass through a number of ante chambers which only open with code, a magnetic card and after recognition by the guard manning video cameras. It has hermetically sealed doors, is entirely air-conditioned and has filtration system so that it would remain safe even in case of nuclear attack. (*Daily Telegraph*, January 25, 1991). There is also an internal well linked to a natural water reserve at a depth of 400 metres, which cannot be contaminated. The operations office of this bunker, from which president Saddam Hussain has recently been broadcasting, has all the necessary telephonic and computer links to enable him to direct the war from there. Mr. Lebere is of the view that President Saddam Hussain could survive in and function from this emplacement over a long period of time.

Mr. Saddam Hussain has called this war the 'mother of all wars' (*Umm-al-Maharib*) and thinks that from his hiding place in his underground palace he is going to win it. But he is only living in a fool's paradise. He has cut himself off from reality and is destined to lose.

## 27 January, 1991

Makka, the holiest place for Muslims, was the venue of a world conference from the 9th to the 11th of January, 1991, during the Gulf crisis. It was attended by *ulamas* (religious scholars) from Saudi Arabi and other countries of the world. After three days of deliberations the Makka declaration to the Muslim *Ummah* was made public. The following is an extract from the authenticated text, published by the Arabic Weekly, Al-Dawah of January 17, 1991 (p. 7):

"Message to the Iraqi forces: disobedience to the orders of Mr. Saddam Hussain is obligatory under the Shariah."

According to the report, the *ulamas* assembled there were unanimous in urging Mr. Saddam Hussain to vacate Kuwait immediately. It was declared, moreover, that it was the duty of the Iraqi forces not to support Mr. Saddam Hussain in his act of tyranny. The conference also urged the Muslims of the world not to support the Iraqi President and to condemn his invasion of Kuwait, which has given the Americans and other western countries the opportunity to enter the Gulf.

In principle, I agree with the verdict of the *ulamas*. Strangely, this appeal was disregarded by most Muslim countries, and Muslims the world over rose to back Mr. Saddam Hussein. While it can be said that the Iraqi forces had no option but to go along with their leader, the Muslim masses were under no such compulsion. There was no call for them to support Mr. Saddam Hussein. This rift which has appeared between the *ulamas* and the Muslim masses is quite unprecedented.

The reason for this can be traced to the fact that the *ulamas* and Muslim leaders have themselves been responsible for turning the Muslims against the communities concerned (i.e. the Jews and the Christians). Now it has become impossible for the Muslims to take an unbiased, dispassionate stand. The hatred for the west which has been implanted by our leaders in the Muslim psyche could culminate in no other way. If they gave their support to Saddam Hussain, it was because he appeared to them in the guise of the deliverer of Palestine.

## 28 January, 1991

The newspapers are full of the Iraqi leader's rhetoric. He says, for example, that the Arabian desert will be turned into a graveyard for the American and Allied Forces. Muslims are impressed by this brave show, as if it were a real crusade, a war of *jihad*. On the other hand, the stand taken by Shah Fahad of Saudi Arabia, in joining the Americans and their allies, strikes them as sheer cowardice.



It has been reported to me that posters have been affixed to walls in the lama Masjid area, in Delhi, bearing such slogans as “The Saudis and the Israelis are two sides of the same coin.” A man reportedly prayed aloud after the congregational prayer was over. “O God, bring death to the Saudis and the Israelis.”

As for who is right and who is wrong in the present Gulf crisis, it would appear – if one goes by the Hadith – that it is the Saudis who are right and not the other party.

Imam al Tirmizi quoting Amr Bin Auf’s narration of a prophetic tradition, says that as the end of the world draws close, faith will be found in the Arabian peninsula alone. According to this tradition, God’s messenger was heard to say, “Faith will seek shelter in Hijaz (Arabia) as the snake does in its pit.”

There is a more direct reference to the present situation in another tradition. In his book, *Kitab-al-Malahim*, Imam Abu Daud records Dhu Mikhbar as having heard God’s messenger say, “you will gain the spoils of war and you will be blessed. Then you will return and camp in a meadow with hills in its vicinity. A man from the Christians will raise a cross and proclaim, ‘It is the cross that has triumphed.’ This will anger a man among the Muslims and he will break the cross. The Christians will then revoke the treaty and will rally for war. (Abu Dau’d, *Sunan*, vol 4, p. 109).

In the light of these Hadiths, the Muslims’ stand is certainly not correct. What they are doing is just a matter of satisfying their whims. They are not going by the sunnah or the Qur’an.

## 29 January, 1991

Mr. S. Nihal Singh, and Indian journalist who was in Baghdad when the Gulf war started, has had his experiences published in the *Hindustan Times* of January 29. He was staying at the Hotel Al-Rashid alongwith of the journalists. Dollar was the only currency acceptable against payment of any bill. On this he comments: “Much as the United States was the hated symbol of western might, the dollar still ruled in Baghdad.”

This shows that the Americans and other western countries are virtually in control of world resources. The irony of it is that Muslims who hate America, – as a visit there will reveal – have opted for citizenship of the US in order to improve their prospects.

If Muslim prospects are really to improve, the proper thing to do under these circumstances would be to bring Muslim countries into the field of science and technology. But no worthwhile efforts are being made towards this end. God has endowed Muslim countries with the wealth of petroleum, thus giving them the economic clout to accomplish any developmental programme that they choose. But it is unfortunate that some of these countries are squandering their wealth in luxurious living, while others are busy acquiring deadly weapons so that they can use them against other Muslim countries. The most glaring example is that of Iraq.

Mr. Saddam Hussain acquired wealth from oil without any effort, but he did not see fit to utilize this wealth for the progress of his country. Instead, he purchased deadly weapon systems from the U.S.S.R. Germany, France, etc. and then began threatening his neighbours. Had he used his oil wealth in the development of his country, we could safely assume that Iraqi currency would have enjoyed the same economic importance as the American dollar today.

The decline in the fortunes of Muslim countries, far from being traceable to outside conspiracies, results directly from their own internal weaknesses. Those who 'reveal' and give wide publicity to external plotting to account for the downfall of Muslims do little other than show how ill-informed they and other Muslims are.

### 30 January, 1991

A Muslim I met who lives in London, claims that all Muslims living in London are siding with Mr. Saddam Hussain in this war.

Only a handful of Muslims who get money from Saudi Arabia are on the Saudis' side. My reply to this was that there was no logic in this presumption, for one might also describe the supporters of Saddam Hussain as only those people who are receiving money from him. Then I asked him why Saddam Hussain had not attacked Israel, and why he had chosen to invade Kuwait. He told me that he had been informed by the Iraqi Ambassador in London that when Iraq wanted to attack Israel, it had sought the help of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but to no avail. In the face of their unwillingness to participate Iraq had to resort to the invasion of Kuwait. I suggested to my friend that he should have pointed out to the Ambassador that if Iraq could attack Iran without the help of Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, and could later attack Kuwait without anyone's help, it could certainly have done the same to Israel. But the Ambassador, it seems, put up the pretext of Iraqi fears of American retaliation against an attack on Israel. I asked my friend why he had not pointed out that the Americans had in any case entered the fray. The Iraqis could have shown the same disregard for this eventuality as they had in the case of Kuwait.

This is an example of how shallow Muslims have become in their thinking, and their leaders are taking full advantage of this in order to mislead them.

Very often when there is much talk of principles, we find that it is in justification of personal whims and caprices. A man who aspires to leadership will frequently turn minor mishaps into major emergencies and call it a struggle in God's name, solely to establish his own supremacy. His actions are inspired by material gain, albeit on behalf of the nation, but he will claim that he follows this path because he is a seeker after Truth. This is tantamount to adding insult to injury. No amount of felicitous phrases can ever really justify such selfish action.

26 September 1991

### Spending what one has in order to escape the Fire

Adi ibn Hatim heard the Prophet say: "Save yourselves from the Fire, be it with a piece of a date, and if you do not have that, then with a kind word."

(Al-Bukhari, Muslim)